

Mr. Speaker, I fear that we are embarking on a perilous path. Now, more than ever, we must recommit to protecting this vital freedom.

Instead of stripping away Americans' constitutional rights, the U.S. Government should be focused on enforcing law and order. Instead of stripping away Americans' constitutional rights, the U.S. Government should be focused on protecting our citizens from gang violence, stopping human trafficking, and stopping the illicit drugs that cross our porous southern border.

The President is correct that we have a public health crisis. We have a public health crisis on the southern border. While the Commander in Chief spends time plotting ways to subvert the U.S. Constitution, the brave men and women of U.S. Customs and Border Protection are encountering record numbers of migrants attempting to cross the border unlawfully.

Last month alone, border agents encountered more than 170,000 migrants, a colossal 400 percent increase from the same time last year. Yes, this is indeed a crisis. But the problem is not with the law-abiding citizens. The problem is not with the Second Amendment.

Here in Washington, our leaders need to get their priorities in order. We need to uphold our oath to defend the U.S. Constitution. We need to defend the American people from foreign threats. And we need to protect our fundamental freedoms.

COMMITTING TO RECONCILIATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, and still I rise because I love my country.

And, Mr. Speaker, I rise today understanding that we are in mourning. Our country is grieving. There are many reasons for this, but we still haven't acknowledged that there is something we can do to eliminate some of the mourning and grieving.

We are mourning because police officers are being murdered. Many have been murdered across the length and breadth of the country. We are mourning because persons are losing their lives at the hand of the police. Many have lost their lives. We are in a state of mourning, but it goes back far beyond George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, Sandra Bland. It goes back to really the founding of the country because we have not atoned for some of our transgressions. Literally, we have committed crimes against humanity for which we have not atoned.

Slavery was a crime against humanity; we have not atoned. What we did to the indigenous population was a crime against humanity; we have not atoned. The internment of the Japa-

nese, based upon our xenophobia, we have not atoned. Banning Chinese from the country, we have not atoned. What we did to Muslims, banning them from the country, we have not atoned.

There must be atonement. We have to reconcile. We did not do so in 1868, as it relates to slavery. We should have, but we had a President who was antithetical to it, Andrew Johnson.

So, I am going to offer a resolution, a resolution to create a department of reconciliation such that we can accomplish our atonement, get out of this grieving, and bring our country together.

When we had a systemic need for dealing with agriculture, we created a Department of Agriculture. When commerce was in need of some help, we created a Department of Commerce. We have a Department of Labor because labor needs the kinds of legislation and the kinds of benefits that a Congress can accord labor, the persons who actually work for a living. When we needed defense, we created a Department of Defense and a Department of Homeland Security.

So, I am proposing that we have a department of reconciliation so we can deal with the issues that have haunted this country for centuries. A department of reconciliation with a secretary of reconciliation, a department of reconciliation with a budget, a department of reconciliation with under secretaries so that we can accomplish our atonement with a department of reconciliation. It can be done.

I am not asking for a commission. This is about a commitment. A department indicates that you are committed to a cause. We were committed to labor; that is why we have a Department of Labor. We were committed to education; that is why we have a Department of Education. We now need a department of reconciliation, a commitment to ending this long, sorrowful grieving that we have suffered over the years so that we can understand each other better and work together better with each other.

If we fail to do this, if we fail to reconcile, Dr. King's words will become our greatest nightmare. He indicated that we must learn to live together as brothers and, I would add, sisters, or we will perish together as fools. We need a department of reconciliation. I will introduce a resolution for such.

KEEPING FOOD ON AMERICANS' TABLES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last month, the House Agriculture Committee hosted its first, or at least more fulsome, attempt at publicly reviewing the pandemic and Congress' response.

This pandemic has infiltrated our lives in every sense possible. Unfortu-

nately, the brunt of it was borne by our communities and, in particular, families already living paycheck to paycheck. In too many instances, arrogant career politicians issued statewide, indiscriminate edicts, forcing businesses and schools to shut their doors, plummeting our communities into a deep recession.

As the end of the pandemic nears, I hope we can use what we learned in that hearing to provide these families with more holistic services, particularly as they engage in a postpandemic economy that will look wildly different.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, currently provides nutrition assistance to 43 million individuals, with an average individual benefit of \$183. Total SNAP-related spending in fiscal year 2020 was \$78.9 billion, which includes benefits, administration, nutrition education, employment and training, and program integrity. Of that \$78.9 billion, \$74.2 billion was solely for benefits.

By way of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, and the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, more than \$37.8 billion has been appropriated to respond to the supplemental nutrition assistance needs of our communities.

This monumental response is in addition to the more than \$7.7 billion per month in standard SNAP benefits. Beyond direct funding from Congress, the former and current administrations have issued more than 4,000 administrative waivers to States. These waivers impact operations related to program eligibility, distribution of benefits, employment and training, and more.

These facts are startling. Combined with myriad social service policies, including those found in the short-sighted, outrageously naive American Rescue Plan, we are in the midst of our Nation's second-largest expansion of entitlements.

Unsurprisingly, leading economists and Wall Street analysts have said key parts of that bill are poorly targeted to the specific needs of the crisis. As a friend in southwest Missouri recently said, unnecessary rescue diminishes a person's dignity and, if repeated enough, gives way to debilitating dependency.

The witnesses who joined us for the hearing are our everyday heroes. They are the folks who responded without hesitation to the needs of their communities infested by a pandemic that took the lives of hundreds of thousands of our friends, neighbors, and family members. Whether it be the farmer who chose to donate their crop or the food bank that opened additional sites to be more accommodating, the witnesses who testified deserve our thanks.

I must also applaud the Department, particularly the former administration. Like it or lump it, the bulk of the